DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 163 515 CS 204 592

AUTHOR Henry, Susan
TITLE Hannah Bunce Watson: Patriot Printer in the American Revolution.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (61st, Seattle, Washington, August 13-16, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Females; Freedom of Speech; *Journalism; *Newspapers; News Reporting; *Press Opinion; Propaganda; Revolutionary War (United States); *United States History; *Working Women
IDENTIFIERS *Watson (Hannah Bunce)

ABSTRACT

Although Hannah Watson had had little printing training prior to her husband's unexpected death, she assumed his job as publisher of the "Connecticut Courant" newspaper, a vehement advocate of the patriot cause, for 16 months during the Revolutionary War. In spite of problems such as wartime printing shortages, the burning and reconstruction of the paper mill, inflation, and the responsibility of settling her husband's estate, Watson's paper was financially successful and maintained a patriotic editorial policy that reminded readers of the war and the principles behind it in every issue. The paper supplied battle descriptions from all of the colonies, analyses of significant events, and news of British home events and criticisms of Parliament, while calling for colonist support and economic sacrifice. Excluding advertising and short local items, the paper carried only nine nonpolitical articles during this period. When Hannah Watson married a successful businessman, she turned over her position and property to him and retired to private life and the newspaper assumed a conservative editorial policy. (MAI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED163515

Committee on the Status of Women in Journalism Education Research Session

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

HANNAH BUNCE WATSON:

PATRIOT PRINTER IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By Susan Henry

Assistant Professor

Department of Journalism
California State University, Northridge
Northridge, California 91330
(213) 885-3144

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Susan Henry

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Presented to the Committee on the Status of Women in Journalism Education Research Session, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Seattle, Washington, August, 1978

CS004592

On September 22, 1777 Hannah Bunce Watson ran a short announcement in a black-bordered issue of the Connecticut Courant:

> On Tuesday last, departed this life after a distressing sickness, Mr. Ebenezer Watson, Printer, in the 34th year of his age. A gentleman of most humane heart. . . his press hath been devoted to the vindication of rational liberty. . . . He has left a melancholy widow, with five young children, and a numerous circle of friends to lament his death.

In this way the "melancholy widow" informed Courant readers of both her husband's death and her own sad position, which was to remain very difficult for more than a year. Yet her many practical and emotional problems did not prevent her from successfully publishing an important newspaper and supporting both her family and the patriot cause during a crucial period of the American Revolution.

This study will describe three key aspects of the life and work of Hannah Watson. First is her management of a large Hartford printing business, including publishing a newspaper which went on to become the country's oldest.[1] Second is her contribution to the patriot's propaganda war. Third is her position as one of 17 women who printed in colonial America[2]--women who have received little attention from journalism historians and still are incompletely understood.

Hannah Watson was barely 28 years old when her husband died in 1777. Born on December 20, 1749 little is known about her background beyond the fact that her father was Aaron Bunce of Lebanon, Conn. By 1770 the Bunce family had probably moved to Hartford, and in August of that year—less than four months after the death of Ebenezer's first wife and shortly before he had taken over the Courant—the two were married. Between 1772 and 1777 Hannah gave birth to four children, also caring for a daughter born to her husband's first wife in 1770.[3]

The family lived in a rented two-story house on the southern border of Hartford's Main Street. The Courant print shop occupied a building just off

the north end of that street.[4] This location of the Watson home at a distance from the print shop, combined with the birth of four children in five years, makes it unlikely that Hannah worked in her husband's shop. Nor would she have been under any immediate pressure to learn the trade, since her husband was only 27 years old when he became owner of the business in 1770.[5] He could have been expected to run the operation and support his family for many years. Thus, although many colonial printers did utilize female family members as shop workers,[6] this does not appear to have been the case with Ebenezer Watson.

Instead, Watson relied on the help of George Goodwin, a Hartford youth who had joined the shop in 1766 at the age of nine. When Watson took over as owner, Goodwin stayed on, apparently as an apprentice.[7] He quickly developed into a skilled printer--probably a much better one than Watson.[8] Goodwin was likely in charge of much of the press work and composing, leaving Watson to care for the rest of the business.

With George Goodwin's substantial help, Watson printed a staunchly patriot Connecticut Courant. By the time of his death the paper had carried sufficient patriot rumors, proclamations, letters, poems, political essays, biased battle accounts and emotional condemnations of the British to establish itself as one of the colonies' foremost patriot newspapers.[9]

Yet Watson's strong political stand apparently did not interfere with his printing profits. In late 1774 the Courant announced that it had a moderate 700 subscribers,[10] but the disruption of Boston's patriot press after the British occupied the city in 1775 resulted in a hefty increase in the Courant circulation.[11] A similar situation occurred after the British took New York in late 1776, by which time, according to fellow printer Isaiah Thomas, the Courant's circulation matched or exceeded that of any colonial paper.[12]

As substantial as the swollen Courant subscription list was the increase in Watson's government work caused by the colony's war-related activities. Although the patriot Timothy Green in New London was the official government printer, the great volume of wartime printing work generated by the General Assembly meeting in Hartford, along with the need for speed in producing this work, meant that Watson received much new business.[13] The legislators never stated their motives in allocating this work to Watson, but it is very possible that his strong political loyalties were an important consideration.

In addition to this government work, he printed considerable non-government material. His best year for outside printing was 1774, when he is known to have printed 12 books and pamphlets totalling over 500 pages.[14] Fewer works have been recorded for 1775, 1776 and the first nine months of 1777, but his production during this time was still substantial.[15]

In March 1776 Watson and a partner, Austin Ledyard, opened a paper mill across the Connecticut River from Hartford, thus insuring him of a ready paper supply.[16] He had less success in obtaining good type,[17] but seems to have had few other serious printing problems.[18] Overall, the Watson print shop profited more than it lost as a result of the war, most notably in increased Courant circulation and substantial government work. Certainly by mid-1777, with a new paper mill operating, new types ordered[19] and a large quantity of interesting war news filling his newspaper, Ebenezer must have felt financially confident.

This business success allowed Hannah and Ebenezer Watson to live well, furnishing their home with a particularly large quantity of china, many chairs, numerous tables and beds, and a great deal of linen. The inventory of Ebenezer's estate also reveals the presence of such luxuries as wine glasses, a chafing dish and silver teaspoons.[20] These possessions indicate that the Watsons were both status-conscious and acquisitive, investing considerable sums to furnish their home in an elegant manner.[21]

Ebenezer himself was as fashionably furnished as his home, owning a wardrobe which included an unusually luxurious collection of vests, coats and breeches, as well as such extravagant items as silver knee buckles and gold sleeve buttons. He must have been quite concerned about his appearance, and likely spent a good deal of time in front of the "Large Looking Glass" listed in his inventory.[22] Clearly he would have been appropriately dressed for mixing with the socially respected citizens of the town.

Ebenezer's first wife, Elizabeth Seymour, had been a member of a prominent Hartford family,[23] indicating that he had at times circulated in fairly exclusive local social circles. It seems likely, then, that he appreciated and cultivated whatever prestige his position as a businessman and his connections with government could offer.[24] And his wife would have shared in his prestige.

The couple also held an important position within Hartford's religious establishment, for Ebenezer and another man led and taught the singing in the city's Second Congregational Church.[25] He had also been active in local military affairs since before the start of the war, and in August 1777 was made an ensign in the Governor's Guard.[26]

Given all these activities in the summer of 1777, one of the last things on his mind must have been the possibility of his own death. He was only 33 years old, and his energetic business, church and military activities testify that he was probably physically robust. He hired no extra printing help in the months before his death,[27] as would have been necessary if he had been incapacitated for long. Nor did his obituary mention any long illness.[28]

Additional evidence of his healthy physical state is found in the fact that he neither made a will nor settled his accounts before he died.[29] Yet he owned a printing business, half interest in a paper mill, and many costly household items. The total value of these possessions was assessed at £872 in silver

money.[30] As a successful businessman with a wife and five children, he would have been concerned with the disposition of such property if he had had forewarnings of death.

Certainly Hannah Watson could not have anticipated her husband's death either, so would have had little chance to learn much from him about the printing trade. Thus in September 1777 she was faced with four major demands: adjusting to the sudden loss of her husband; learning to operate the printing business she had inherited; settling her husband's complicated estate; supporting five children between the ages of seven years and seven months.

Hannah's immediate involvement in the printing operation was no doubt compelled in part because Ebenezer's estate was in such disarray. Although his accounts were not completely settled for 12 years, final calculations showed that he was owed more than £1,400 in continental money, and owed more than £1,000. Some 200 claims were eventually lodged against the estate, which in turn received payment for about 120 claims.[31] Hannah was the estate's court-appointed administrator,[32] a job which was to require her steady attention for more than a year.

Her problems were drastically compounded on the night of January 27, 1778, when the paper mill burned down. Arson was suspected in the blaze which destroyed not only the paper-making equipment but, according to the mill's owners, 150 reams of writing paper, almost 100 reams of printing paper, and a large quantity of the raw materials used in paper-making.[33] The printing business was severely threatened because the mill had been its sole source of paper.[34]

At this time the mill was jointly owned by Hannah Watson and Austin Ledyard's young widow Sarah.[35] Less than 24 hours after the fire was put out, the widows petitioned the General Assembly for help, arguing that the destruction meant "the loss of their dependence for themselves & fatherless Children." They also described the businesses' "great utility to the Publick," since in addition to

supplying all the paper for the Courant, it had provided "a great Part of the writing Paper used in this State for one year past," as well as "large Quantities for the use of Continental Army."[36]

Although they assured the Assembly that they were "desirious of immediately" rebuilding the mill, they said that this would be impossible without an interest-free loan of "a sufficient Sum" to finance the reconstruction.[37] The Assembly responded three days later with something more beneficial than a loan: authorization for the women to raise £1,500 in continental money for the mill through a public lottery.[38]

The Courant announced the lottery in early February, and readers must have been impressed with the paper's explanation that "The General Assembly in granting the lottery had regard not only to repairing the loss of the immediate sufferers, but to the great importance that it is to the Public to have the Paper-Mill speedily rebuilt."[39] Two weeks later the lottery's managers claimed that "the sale of the Tickets has exceeded their most sanguine expectations,"[40] and by early March almost all tickets had been sold.[41] By that time the Courant was also advertising for carpenters to begin rebuilding the mill.[42]

Evidently the reconstruction proceeded rapidly, for in mid-April the newspaper announced "with Pleasure" that the mill would "soon be compleated."[43] Watson and Ledyard began replenishing their rag stock in early February,[44] and by early May they published offers to buy the sizing needed in paper manufacturing.[45] In late May the paper advertised for "Two or three Journeymen PAPER-MAKERS."[46] The Courant never announced the mill's official opening, but this evidence suggests that it was fully operational by late May.

Although the mill was quickly rebuilt and Hannah Watson and Sarah Ledyard avoided the financial strain which repayment of a large Assembly loan would have caused, the January fire still resulted in printing problems evident in the

Courant. During most of February and all of March the paper shortage shrunk the newspaper from its usual four pages to two.[47] It is not known whether circulation was affected by this cutback, but advertising clearly was; many issues carried almost a page of ads--close to what the pre-fire Courant had run--but others included barely more than a column.[48] Still, not one issue was skipped.

Hannah's paper mill problems must have been made more endurable as the result of an earlier action: by mid-January of 1778 she had gone into partnership with George Goodwin. The beginning of the partnership was never formally announced in the paper, but the January 13 masthead added a line, "Printed and Published by Watson and Goodwin." After her husband's death Hannah had removed the masthead imprint, and for more than three months the paper had carried no printer identification. Only the non-Courant materials produced by Hannah in 1777 bore the imprint "Printed by Hannah Watson."[49]

Perhaps she had doubted her abilities to carry on the newspaper; indeed, she never announced in print that she had taken it over. Similarly, she waited more than three months after her husband's death to inform readers that "The business in all its branches is continued as usual."[50] It thus seems likely that, in spite of the low-keyed manner in which her new partnership with George Goodwin was acknowledged, it was a very important step for Hannah and her business.

Although only 20 years old, Goodwin had already worked in the shop for 11 years and was a skilled printer.[51] Presumably, the talents he brought to the partnership were in the practical areas of printing and composing, for he was primarily to do this kind of work for the rest of his long career.[52] There is no evidence that additional printing help was hired after Ebenezer's death,[53] so Goodwin must have had to concentrate on the mechanics of printing.

This would have left Hannah to handle the business side of the operation, and by the time of the fire she had already made two notable changes in this

area. In November 1777 she raised the price the paper would pay for a pound of rags from two pence to three,[54] and shortly afterwards she increased the Courant subscription price to keep up with war-related inflation.[55]

Similarly, she made firm attempts to settle Ebenezer's complicated estate. In mid-January she announced that people with claims on the estate should "exhibit them for settlement," while people who owed the estate were "desired to make immediate payment."[56] Among the debtors were many carriers who delivered the Courant and collected subscription costs. In February and March several carriers ran ads asking readers to immediately pay their bills so that Hannah could be paid,[57] indicating that she was pressing them for payment.

Nor did Hannah confine her collection efforts to private requests to Courant carriers. In one direct plea to the paper's readers just after the fire, she warned that if the business failed "the public will view it as an inevitable misfortune in which they are called to share. Under the circumstances," she argued, "it is scarcely necessary to mention, that HUMANITY, as well as JUSTICE, obliges every one who is indebted to the estate of Mr. WATSON, deceas'd, to make immediate payment."[58]

In addition to trying to settle her husband's estate, overseeing the reconstruction of the mill, and insuring the regular production of the Courant, Hannah was responsible for making sure that other print shop business continued as usual. This may have been particularly difficult in late 1777, for Nehimiah Strong's Connecticut Almanack, printed and sold by the shop, was advertised as being for sale almost two months later than it had been in previous years.[59] And although records are incomplete, Hannah is only known to have printed one long work in addition to the almanac during the last three months of 1777.[60]

In 1778, though, the "Watson and Goodwin" imprint appeared on at least ten surviving non-government works of some 300 pages.[61] In the first two months of

1779 (the last of the partnership), at least six pamphlets, totalling more than 100 pages, were produced.[62] Additional books and pamphlets were regularly advertised for sale in the shop's bookstore.[63] This activity indicates that the partnership was productive and profitable.

By May 1778, with the paper mill completed and four-page issues of the Courant resumed, the printers were ready to advertise for "a couple of ingenious, active, hearty LADS . . . willing to serve a faithful apprenticeship . . . in the art of Printing.--An art which the rising glory of America will render necessary and important."[64] That more than one boy was requested may be evidence that Watson and Goodwin felt sufficiently secure to expand their operation; their confidence in the national future was similarly demonstrated. Another apprenticeship ad appeared in September,[65] and, as further indication that business was growing, in late fall of that year the printers ran frequent announcements that they wanted to buy lamp black,[66] probably because they had begun to manufacture their own ink.

The inflation which affected the entire country, though, also hit the Courant. Subscription prices, raised first in December 1777, were increased again the next October to keep up with "the fluctuating state of the currency and the great rise in [the price of] the necessaries of life."[67] The printers explained that they had "waited to the limits of patience and justice" to raise the rates, and expressed confidence that readers would be willing to pay the higher amount.[68] Assuming circulation did not suffer, the paper must have been doing very well, for when in January 1778 Hannah Watson and Sarah Ledyard petitioned the General Assembly for help, they claimed that Courant circulation exceeded 8,000.[69] Presented as it was in a formal document, this figure, although probably not wholly accurate, might be seen as closer to the truth than the circulation estimates offered by many other papers of the period.[70] Adver-

tising also remained healthy, running three to four columns for most issues published in 1778.[71]

The most serious war-related problem suffered by the business seems to have been a rag shortage. This was particularly severe after the paper mill—with its depleted stock—went into operation in May 1778. During that month the printers pleaded with readers to save rags and, as a new incentive, offered to pay not only three pence per pound for them but also "20 per cent for collecting."[72] In June, when they were only able to obtain enough paper to produce a two-page issue of the Courant, Watson and Goodwin warned: "The PRINTERS hope they shall be able for the future to furnish the public with a whole sheet of news, which however must entirely depend upon the care and attention of people in saving their RAGS."[73] And in late July they reacted to both the shortage and inflation by offering six pence per pound.[74]

The rag supply was probably adequate by fall, for, although almost every Courant issue advertised for rags, no ad announced further price increases. In addition, most fall issues carried notices that the printers were selling writing paper and blank forms, indicating that sufficient rags existed to stock this important sideline. Furthermore, only two fall issues of the paper ran two pages instead of four, and in one of these the printers explained that not a rag shortage but "An accident at the Paper-Mill prevented our obtaining the usual supply of Paper."[75]

Overall, the Courant's war injuries appear to have been relatively minor—as were the colony's. Soldiers marched to battle over Connecticut roads, men were enlisted there, war prisoners were jailed there, and warships landed at New London harbor, but almost no fighting took place in the colony itself. Similarly, by early 1777 most of the colony's Tories had either been exiled or silenced, and the debate on the desirability of the fight for independence was over.[76]

Yet readers of Watson and Goodwin's Courant were reminded of both the fighting and the principles behind it in every issue. The printers' adamant patriot sentiments were constantly and sometimes creatively expressed, so that readers must have strongly felt the dangers and seriousness of the war even though they did not directly experience the fighting.

One way the war was brought home was through the battle accounts appearing in almost every issue from colonies such as New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. Letters from George Washington, other generals and soldiers involved in the fighting supplied specific details. Often patriot soldiers and leaders were praised for their courage and resoluteness, while the British were pictured as heartless blunderers. A typical account described the British retreating from a New Jersey town after plundering it and committing "many other barbarities on the defenseless inhabitants."[77] Conversely, when British General William Howe occupied Philadelphia in the fall of 1777, Washington was seen as the victor because, "in case Howe is defeated, of which there is the greatest possibility, it will be almost impossible for his army to escape."[78]

Although such battle descriptions and analyses were usually serious, the paper occasionally made light of British behavior. For example, the entrance of General Howe's troops into Haddonfield, N.J., was said to have taken place "to the great terror of horned cattle, and the no small peril of some undefended haystacks." The British far outnumbered the patriots but were scared off anyway: "happiest was the Briton who had the longest legs and the nimblest heels." The paper also warned that this retreat would be "dished up" as a victory "by the loyal and royal typographical cooks in New York," and seen the same way by some London papers, "it being the curse of heaven upon an abandoned nation that it shall be deluded till it is destroyed."[79]

Indeed, Watson and Goodwin kept careful watch over British home affairs.

Readers were told of the imminent invasion of England by the French and Spanish navies,[80] and of the dissatisfaction ordinary British citizens felt over the war.[81] Criticisms of the war in Parliament received much detailed attention,[82] and when King George III went before Parliament to speak in support of the war his remarks were identified by the Courant as "The BRITISH PHARAOAH'S SPEECH to His VENAL PARLIAMENT."[83] One Courant article reacted to the speech by announcing that through it the King had shown himself guilty of "breaking his oath, and violating all laws, divine and human."[84]

The Courant was also concerned with the war-caused "present ill state of our currency,"[85] as it once described economic problems. Rapidly rising prices and taxes as well as war profiteering were discussed at great length, particularly during the winters of 1777-78 and 1778-79.[86] The pros and cons of proposed regulating acts were also extensively examined.[87] Generally, Watson and Goodwin advocated higher taxes so that the army could be paid regularly and better, a voluntary lowering of prices and the stabilization of the paper money through some government regulation. They praised and called a "patriotic example" the businesspeople who "have entered into the spirit of the regulatory act, and are now disposing of their dear-bought goods at the stated prices."[88]

Economic sacrifices were to be expected, they explained, since "Every thinking person at the beginning of the present war, expected that it would require the greatest exertions."[89] One particular sacrifice advocated by the printers was saving clothing, supplies and money in order to donate them to the army.[90] Readers were told that although they might not be able to fight battles themselves, "it is not out of your power to give relief."[91]

The Courant's most emotional and dramatic propaganda appeared in its poetry. Patriotic poems ran frequently,[92] and were full of stirring lines and exclamations: "To BATTLE! WASHINGTON impatient mourns/ His scanty legions, and demands

your aid!"[93] "But Britain, oh! how painful 'tis to tell!/ Commits a sin that makes it blush in hell."[94] Sentiments were sometimes jauntily expressed, as in this description of "the TRUE SOLDIER": "No horrible story of Briton or Hessian/ Can ever induce him to quit his profession."[95] At other times they were more elaborate, as in this picture of the attempted rape of America by King George: "An Orphan Child fell to my care/ Fair as the morn was she. To large possessions she was the heir/ And friendly still to me./ But GEORGE, my son, beheld the maid/ With fierce, lascivious eye:/ To ravish her a plan he laid/ And she was forced to fly."[96]

Watson and Goodwin's Courant, then, was solidly patriotic in its news accounts, essays and poems. So complete was the paper's concern with the patriot cause that its non-political material under this partnership can easily be counted. Excluding advertising and short local items such as lottery and death notices or printers' announcements, the paper carried only nine non-political articles. Almost half of these were bunched into the summer of 1778, and most of the rest appeared in early 1779.[97] Certainly the paper seldom reached the emotional heights to which Ebenezer Watson had brought it during the fiery political controversies of 1774-76, but Ebenezer himself had already retreated from these heights as Connecticut's politics calmed down in 1777.[98] Thus, the Courant's more restrained contents under Watson and Goodwin can largely be traced to the times.

Unfortunately for Hannah Watson, her concerns involved more than producing the Courant and running the print shop. The paper mill so vital to the business became a financial burden as well when she discovered that before his death Ebenezer had signed his portion over to Austin Ledyard, apparently in return for a loan.[99] In February 1778 Hannah asked the General Assembly to investigate the matter and determine her share of mill ownership. The legislators ruled that

she must pay Sarah Ledyard £380 in order to resume her husband's half share of the operation.[100] She may have had trouble raising that sum, for it was not paid until January 1779.[101]

To add to her personal troubles, her husband's estate was far from settled. Her January 1778 requests that people clear up their accounts had undoubtedly helped straighten out some bills, but many more remained, as evidenced by similar requests appearing in the Courant during November and December of 1778 and January of the next year. As a measure of the anticipated response to these notices, she promised to be in "constant attendance . . . at the Printing-Office, on the Mondays and Tuesdays of each week in December and January" to clear up estate claims.[102] So involved was the estate that all claims were not settled until 1788.[103]

She must also have worried about her young children. Because the print shop was located far from her home she would have been separated from them a great deal, perhaps leaving them in the care of a neighbor. Her husband had been a respected and active community member, so his sudden death at such an early age must have drawn sympathy and help from many Hartford citizens. One of the most important of these people was probably Hannah's next-door-neighbor, Barzillai Hudson. He was a recent widower whose wife had been a first cousin of Ebenezer Watson's first wife.[104] Although trained as a stonemason, Hudson had been involved in Watson's print shop, for in late 1772 readers had been told that those who had not yet paid their bills would be "waited upon for ballances dur from them . . . by Mr. Barzillai Hudson."[105] This knowledge of the printing operation would have been helpful in 1778 when he apparently helped Hannah settle some of her husband's accounts.[106]

Like Ebenezer Watson, Hudson was a member of the Second Congregational Church. Also like Ebenezer, he held a military position, having in early 1777

been appointed by the governor and Council of Safety as commander of the guard around the Hartford County Jail, where war prisoners were kept.[107] The two men had even married members of the same prominent Hartford family within 15 months of each other.[108] Indeed, they had so much in common and lived so near each other that it seems very likely they were good friends.

Hudson seems to have also had financial talent, for in addition to his early work for Ebenezer Watson in collecting back bills, he went on to become a very successful businessman.[109] Hannah might logically have gone to him for advice in business matters and help in settling Ebenezer's estate. Under these circumstances, it probably surprised few people when 29-year-old Hannah Bunce Watson and 37-year-old Barzillai Hudson were married on February 11, 1779.[110] The couple must have known each other well by this time, but beyond that, the marriage offered important practical benefits to both.

For her part, Hannah gained yet another "partner" who had probably already helped her at least with financial decisions. He was not a trained printer, yet she probably considered him qualified to perform many of her printing duties, since these primarily involved the business end of the operation. His printing help would leave her more time for her children—who were supplemented by Barzillai's two youngsters.[111] And as a prominent community member, his association with the print shop might also have been viewed by Hannah as helpful to business.

The practical gains to Hudson were even more substantial. He was apparently a man of local political responsibility but little real wealth, while his marriage to Hannah Watson would make him the owner of a print shop and half a paper mill.[112] He also probably realized that Ebenezer's estate would eventually be settled in his widow's favor. More important, if his new wife gave up her partnership with George Goodwin,[113] then he could count on taking her place. And

less than a month after the marriage Hannah did turn her share of the partnership over to Barzillai. True to the pattern, Courant readers did not receive a full account of this change, being told only "that the late Partnership between WATSON and GOODWIN is now dissolved; and that the Printing Business in all its Branches will be carried out by HUDSON and GOODWIN."[114]

The partnership dissolution can be interpreted as demonstrating Hannah's lack of enthusiasm for printing and need to spend more time with her young family. Yet it also contradicts the strong display of ability, political interest and self-preservation demonstrated earlier when she entered the business on short notice and ably handled the paper mill crisis and other problems.

Thus there is some evidence that, as quietly as she bowed out of the business, she may also have been pushed out. Her new husband lost little time taking over, even inserting advertisements for goods being sold in the store under the shop in his own name, rather than in the name of the Hudson and Goodwin partnership.[115] A contemporary described him as a no-nonsense businessman: "Mr. Hudson was a man of homespun old respectability, of plain strong sense, sturdy principles, and rather dry, harsh manners, having also a limp in the leg."[116] This is the man to whom Hannah gave up the printing business, and with whom she lived until her death at age 57 in 1807.[117]

Under Hudson and Goodwin the Courant went on to become a politically conservative and rather stuffy publication, although advertising and circulation steadily increased, making it a very prosperous one as well.[118] The print shop also expanded, going on to publish some enormously profitable books. At the same time the firm-operated store beneath the shop grew, and by the end of the war the partnership had an interest in two more paper mills.[119]

As someone who had been primarily concerned with the business end of printing--who had worried over such matters as raising subscription prices and

financing a paper mill—Hannah must have been pleased to see the operation prosper under her second husband. Still, she may well have missed the excitement and challenge involved in running a lively and sometimes risky business during a particularly eventful time. That her responsibilities came unexpectedly and involuntarily no doubt influenced the willingness with which she gave them up. Yet these circumstances did not prevent her from attaining brief but definite success as a printer and businesswoman, nor from contributing to the patriot cause.

NOTES

[1]The Courant's claim to be "The Oldest Newspaper of Continuous Publication in America," as the masthead on its editorial page presently states, is investigated and validated in John Bard McNulty, Older Than the Nation: The Story of the Hartford Courant (Stonington, Conn.: The Pequot Press, 1964), pp. i-ii.

[2]The 17 women who worked as printers in colonial America before the ratification of the Constitution in 1788 and their newspapers were: Dinah Nuthead (Maryland printer, no newspaper); Sarah Updike Goddard (Providence Gazette); Mary Katherine Goddard (Pennsylvania Chronicle, Maryland Journal); Ann Smith Franklin (Newport Mercury); Cornelia Smith Bradford (American Weekly Mercury); Anna Maul Zenger (New York Weekly Journal); Elizabeth Timothy (South Carolina Gazette); Clementina Rind (Virginia Gazette); Anne Hoof Green (Maryland Gazette); Margaret Green Draper (Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter); Mary Wilkinson Crouch (Charleston Gazette, Salem Gazette); Hannah Bunce Watson (Connecticut Courant); Elizabeth Borden (South Carolina Weekly Advertiser); Ann Timothy (Gazette of South Carolina, State Gazette of South Carolina); Elizabeth Holt (Independent Gazette, New York Journal); "Mrs. H. Boyle" (Virginia Gazette); Mrs. Nicholas Hasselbach (Maryland printer, no newspaper).

These women are cited in Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, Colonial Women of Affairs (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), pp. 166-179; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, History of Women Suffrage (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881-1922), II: 43-44; Charles Brigham, Journals and Journeymen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), p. 72.

[3]Thomas Watson, John Watson, of Hartford, Conn., and His Descendents (New York: J.M. Bradstreet & Sons, 1865), pp. 16-17, 24. In Jarvis Means Morse, Connecticut Newspapers of the Eighteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 11, Hannah Watson is called a "Hartford girl," indicating that she lived in the city before her marriage, and given the considerable distance between Lebanon and Hartford, it seems likely that she could only have met Ebenezer Watson if she had lived in Hartford.

[4]Eugene Smith, One Hundred Years of Hartford's Courant (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 8; William DeLoss Love, The Colonial History of Hartford Gathered from Original Sources (Hartford: The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1915), pp. 306-11.

[5]McNulty, p. 2.

[6]Dexter, p. 179; Sidney Kobre, The Development of the Colonial Newspaper (Pittsburg: Colonial Press, 1944), p. 43; Lawrence C. Wroth, The Colonial Printer (Charlottesville, Va.: The University Press of Virginia, 1931), pp. 154-55.

[7]There is some disagreement on George Goodwin's precise status. He is described as an apprentice in Love, p. 305, and in James Junius Goodwin, The Goodwins of Hartford, Connecticut (Hartford: Brown and Cross, 1894), p. 640. However, he is called an "office boy" in F. Wilder Spaulding, "The Connecticut Courant," New England Quarterly, 3 (1930), 468. He is simply called an assistant in Albert C. Bates, "Thomas Green," New Haven Historical Society Papers, 8 (1914), 293.

[8]Smith, p. 14, Isaiah Thomas, The History of Printing in America (Worcester, Mass.: Isaac Sturtevant, 1810), I, 191, makes a similar point with his statement that "It does not appear that Watson was a thoroughly taught printer." In contrast, Goodwin is called "a correct printer."

[9]Smith, pp. 23-25; Spaulding, pp. 451-52; Morse, p. 12.

[10]Connecticut Courant, November 21, 1974.

[11]Smith, p. 12.

[12]Thomas, II, p. 90.

[13]Albert C. Bates, "Fighting the Revolution with Printer's Ink in Connecticut," New Haven Historical Society Papers, 9 (1918), 133.

[14]This information is drawn from the very incomplete list of works found in Charles Evans, American Bibliography (New York: Peter Smith, 1914), V, 2-94.

[15]Ibid., pp. 113-214, 222-99, 302-55.

[16]Smith, pp. 11-12.

[17]In the December 15, 1772 Courant Ebenezer admitted that "the Courant is very badly printed, and that the Complaints on that Account are just," but new type was not used to print the Courant until the June 7, 1774 issue. By 1777 this type too had become very worn, and on March 3, 1777, he announced that it was "too bad for use" and said he planned to travel to "a distant State" to buy new type.

[18]Watson's relatively minor problems included the need to raise subscription prices to match inflation (Connecticut Courant, April 28, May 12, 1777), difficulty in buying the large quantities of rags needed in paper-making (Connecticut Courant, August 21, September 4, 1775, October 14, 1776), and the delayed arrival of news (Smith, p. 9).

[19]Although the Courant was not printed with new types until the issue of January 3, 1778, the Watson inventory lists them among his belongings, so he must have ordered them sometime before he died.

[20]Inventory of the Estate of Ebenezer Watson, 1777. Hartford Probate District, No. 5716.

[21]I was aided in the interpretation of this material by information supplied by Stephen Webb of the Syracuse University History Department.

[22]Inventory of the Estate of Ebenezer Watson.

[23]Harlow R. Thompson, Early Hartford Printers (Hartford, 1940), p. 6.

[24]Although most colonial printers seem to have simply been craftspeople, with little special prestige, a few did become important and influential. For information on these printers see Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The Colonial Experience (New York: Random House, 1958), pp. 335-40.

[25]Edwin Pond Parker, History of the Second Church of Christ in Hartford (Hartford: Belknap & Warfield, 1892), p. 152.

[26]Smith, p. 292.

[27]The last apprenticeship ad appeared in the May 26, 1777 issue of the Courant.

[28]Connecticut Courant, September 22, 1777.

[29]A search of the Hartford Probate District Records deposited in the Connecticut State Library revealed no will, and the records dealing with the administration of the estate make it clear that no will had been found at that time.

[30]Inventory of the Estate of Ebenezer Watson.

[31]Accounts of Administration of the Estate of Ebenezer Watson, 1778-1788. Hartford Probate District, No. 5716.

[32]Bond of Administration of the Estate of Ebenezer Watson, October 16, 1777. Hartford Probate District, No. 5716.

[33]Connecticut Courant, February 3, 1778.

[34]Smith, p. 14.

[35]Ibid., p. 271.

[36]Petition to the Connecticut General Assembly, January 28, 1778. Connecticut Historical Society. The February 3, 1778, Courant described the value of the paper mill in more detail:

"The loss, tho' peculiarly HEAVY to the two widows who were owners, is not unfelt by the public. The continental army and officers--the numerous schools--the endless variety of public necessities, and the multitudes who daily look to this office for amusement, instruction and intelligence, will soon discern the failure."

[37]Petition to the Connecticut General Assembly, January 28, 1778.

[38]Records of the Connecticut General Assembly, January 31, 1778.

[39]Connecticut Courant, February 10, 1778.

[40]Connecticut Courant, February 24, 1778.

[41]Connecticut Courant, March 3, 1778.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Connecticut Courant, April 21, 1778.

[44]Connecticut Courant, February 10, 1778.

[45]Connecticut Courant, May 12, 1778.

[46]Connecticut Courant, May 26, June 3, 1778.

[47]The two-page issues appeared on February 3, 10, 17, March 3, 10, 17, 24, April 7, 14, 28, 1778.

[48]These issues appeared on February 17, March 10, 17, April 28, 1778.

[49]Evans, V, pp. 302-45.

[50]Connecticut Courant, January 13, 27, 1778.

[51]Smith, p. 14; McNulty, p. 21.

[52]Smith, pp. 15-16, 136.

[53]The Courant carried no ads for printing apprentices until May 1778.

[54]Connecticut Courant, November 4, 1777. In that notice she explained that the rag shortage had resulted in some two-page issues.

[55]Connecticut Courant, December 30, 1777.

[56]Connecticut Courant, January 13, 27, 1778.

[57]Connecticut Courant, February 24, March 10, 17, 24, 1778. Other carrier ads which did not specifically mention that Hannah had requested they pay her ran on September 8, 22, December 22, 1778; January 5, 1779.

[58]Connecticut Courant, February 3, 1778.

[59]Ebenezer had first advertised the almanac for sale on November 4, 1776, while Hannah's ads for the work did not appear until December 23, 1777. The almanac for 1779 was first advertised on November 17, 1778.

[60]Evans, V, p. 303.

[61]Ibid., pp. 364-421.

[62]Ibid., VI, pp. 30-63.

[63]Hannah's first bookstore ad appeared on December 2, 1777. For other ads see Courant issues for December 16, 1777; April 14, June 23, August 4, September 8, 15, 29, 1778; February 23, 1779.

[64]Connecticut Courant, May 5, 12, 1778.

[65]Connecticut Courant, September 22, 29, 1778.

[66]Connecticut Courant, November 3, 10, December 22, 1778; January 5, 12, 19, 1779.

[67]Connecticut Courant, October 6, 13, 1778.

[68]Ibid.

[69]Petition to the Connecticut General Assembly, January 28, 1778.

[70]McNulty, p. 23, comes to a similar conclusion.

[71]The only drop in advertising occurred in the two-page issues of the Courant.

[72]Connecticut Courant, May 12, 26, 1778.

[73]Connecticut Courant, June 16, 1778.

[74]Connecticut Courant, July 27, 1778.

[75]Connecticut Courant, September 15, 1778.

[76]Oscar Zeichner, Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776 (Williamsburg, Va.: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), pp. 209-18; Smith, p. 32; McNulty, p. 24.

[77]Connecticut Courant, November 3, 1778.

[78]Connecticut Courant, October 14, 1777.

[79]Connecticut Courant, March 31, 1778.

[80]Connecticut Courant, September 22, October 13, November 17, December 1, 1778.

[81]Connecticut Courant, April 28, June 30, July 7, 1778.

[82]Connecticut Courant, November 18, 1777, February 24, March 3, 17, June 30, August 11, 18, 1778.

[83]Connecticut Courant, February 17, 1778.

[84]Connecticut Courant, March 10, 1778.

[85]Connecticut Courant, August 4, 1778.

[86]Connecticut Courant, October 21, November 25, December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1777; January 13, 27, June 2, August 4, 25, September 1, October 20, 27, December 15, 22, 29, 1778; January 5, 12, 19, 26, February 2, 1779.

[87]Connecticut Courant, September 19, 1777; March 24, May 26, June 2, 16, October 20, November 3, 1778.

[88]Connecticut Courant, March 24, 1778.

[89]Connecticut Courant, August 25, 1778.

[90]Connecticut Courant, December 16, 30, 1777; January 13, 1778.

[91]Connecticut Courant, December 16, 1777.

[92]Connecticut Courant, April 14, May 12, June 9, 23, August 18, November 3, 10, December 1, 1778; January 9, 1779.

[93]Connecticut Courant, April 14, 1778.

[94]Connecticut Courant, August 18, 1778.

[95]Connecticut Courant, June 23, 1778.

[96]Connecticut Courant, May 12, 1778.

[97]Connecticut Courant, January 27, May 12, June 16, 23, July 28, August 25, 1778; January 5, 19, February 16, 1779.

[98]Smith, p. 32.

[99]J. Hammond Trumbull, The Memorial History of Hartford County (Boston: Edward C. Osgood, 1886), II, 250.

[100]Records of the Connecticut General Assembly, February 12, 1778. Connecticut Historical Society.

[101]Records of the Connecticut General Assembly, January 20, 1779. Connecticut Historical Society.

[102]Connecticut Courant, November 24, December 29, 1778; January 12, 19, 26, 1779.

[103]Accounts of the Administration of the Estate of Ebenezer Watson, 1778-1788. Hartford Probate District, No. 5716.

[104]Love, p. 307.

[105]Connecticut Courant, December 10, 17, 24, 1771.

[106]Some of the Accounts of Administration of the Estate of Ebenezer Watson for 1778 have "To Barzillai Hudson" written across the top. Although he did not personally settle these accounts (they were settled by Captain James Watson), he may have played some other part in their administration. However, it is also possible that his name was simply written across the top after he became the estate administrator in 1779.

[107]Smith, pp. 15-16; Spaulding, p. 455; Harlow, p. 7.

[108]According to Harlow, p. 7, Barzillai Hudson married Margaret Seymour in July 1766. According to Watson, p. 17, Ebenezer Watson married Elizabeth Seymour in October 1767.

[109]Spaulding, p. 455; Love, pp. 351-52; McNulty, pp. 23-44; Smith, 117-36.

[110]Watson, p. 17.

[111]Smith, p. 15.

[112]According to colonial law, unless the couple formed a prenuptial agreement indicating otherwise--and none appears to have been signed in this case--a husband took possession of all of his wife's property upon their marriage. For details see Richard B. Morris, Studies in the History of American Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), pp. 135-55.

[113]A married woman could petition the courts for permission to form a partnership in her own name, but otherwise was not permitted to do so. For details see Eugenie Andruss Leonard, The Dear-Bought Heritage (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), pp. 318-19.

[114]Connecticut Courant, March 2, 1779.

[115]Connecticut Courant, May 18, 25, June 1, [illegible], 22, 1779.

[116]Samuel Goodrich quoted in Smith, p. 136.

[117]Watson, p. 18.

[118]Smith, pp. 15, 59-79; Spaulding, pp. 456-63.

[119]Smith, pp. 15-16, 136.